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THE HOSPITAL MADE A BETHEL.

"I DO SO WANT TO DIE THERE."

Soldiers! there are many thousand hearts praying for you; but it needs that you pray also for yourselves; not those of you only who have learnt something of a Saviour's love, but every soldier in the ranks. I want every one who reads this to pray that the Lord Jesus would soften his heart, and make him hate sin. Do not any one of you think that you are too sinful to pray. Jesus Christ died for poor sinners, and the feeling yourself to be wretched and deserving of death is the first step in coming to Him. And even those of you who are careless, and are not yet even sorry for your coldness, do you begin by *saying* a prayer. Say it reverentially, even if you cannot do so heartily, and it may be that He who knows the weakness and wickedness of your natural frame will answer even *your* prayers. No heart is too hard for His love to constrain; only look to Him; ask Him to make you love Him.

I will tell you of a poor sinner who was brought to feel his vileness, and the power of Jesus to save him. He was led to do this by a dreadful accident and agonizing pain. Oh, do not *you* wait for trial to drive you to the feet of your offended God; but *now* turn to Him, for He loves rather to draw you to Himself by love and tender mercy.

William L—— was a young soldier of reckless, dissolute character. He married a young woman who, like

himself, knew not the Lord. A few short months only had they spent together, when his regiment was ordered away. Sad was the parting to the poor young wife, who was left with her only relative, a very bad uncle, to earn her daily bread.

William L—— reached his station in safety, and began his march up country. But one day, in jumping out of a wagon, to take his turn of keeping guard, he fell, and the wheel passed over his neck and chin. He was taken up senseless and brought to our hospital. There for days he remained on the borders of the grave, unable to speak or move; a most dreadful object to look upon.

There I saw him the day he was brought in. He was the only man of his regiment left behind, and, therefore, from ignorance of his former character, it was very difficult to know in what manner it was needful to speak to him of gospel truths.

There was in the same ward a soldier of another regiment, a very earnest Christian, who was delighted to meet a fellow-citizen, and who tended William very kindly. Knowing how little hope the doctors entertained of his life, we were both deeply anxious that, though apparently wandering, words of Divine truth should be constantly spoken beside him, and so we read beside him, and breathed earnest prayers that the love of Jesus might cheer that suffering one. After a few days he began to amend; but before he could articulate, he told us by signs, in answer to our questions, that he had been living without God in the world, but that now the nearness of death made him glad to hear the Bible.

God was very gracious to him, and spared him awhile to learn a little of his long neglected Saviour. Contrary to all expectation, he was very soon up and about again,

as strong as ever. Naturally, he was a man devoid of keen feeling, and a long course of sin hardened him to any gentle emotions. Consequently, he found it very difficult to learn to *love* his Saviour. He was deeply humbled with a sense of his vileness, and came trembling to the Cross. There comfort was given him, and he enjoyed a trustful assurance that the blood of sprinkling had washed away even his sins. He clung to the Saviour as all his hope; but it was from knowing that He was all his hope, not with any loving realization of his adoption to sonship. As yet he knew not that perfect love which casteth out fear. He rested on such verses as, "Be Thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort." "Thou art my strong refuge." His countenance was stern, and his extreme dread of again falling away caused him continued depression.

This seemed so strange, though we were very thankful to mark his repentance and humility, that our rejoicing over him was with trembling, lest any hidden root of bitterness should be the cause. William was very reserved, yet there was no doubt that he was thoroughly sincere. His reverence for the Bible, and eagerness to learn more of his Saviour, was marked—there was no half-heartedness about him.

His recovery was wonderfully rapid. I found him one forenoon in his uniform, with all his arms burished. He said to me, "I've got my discharge from Dr. ———, and so I'm going right away with a company of my own regiment who are passing through to-day; I'm very sorry to go." He begged me to read to him once more. We chose Isaiah iv, and then I tried to point out some of the precious thoughts it contains. He was particularly struck with those words, "Shall be

called holy," and told me that he felt he had been washed in the blood of Jesus from all his old filth, that it had been indeed by sore judgment that he had been led to see the truth, and now he would strive to walk close with his God; but he felt so weak he trembled lest he should be led astray. He begged me to pray for him, and promised that he would take this word as his watchword, "*called* holy;" but he told me he had no hope ever to be so holy that his companions would be able to call *him* so. He clung to that word that there is a tabernacle for the tempted ones; a cleft in the rock; a place of refuge; where they can, in other strength than their own, stand shielded midst life's temptations. As I shook hands with him he said, "If I could, I would never leave this hospital; it has been a Bethel to me, and I can't expect now to find any other place the same. I seem strange and cold, and the men all think you are mistaken in thinking so kindly of me; but I'm true for all that, and may be, some time or other, I may come to *love* the Rock I'm clinging to."

I was at the hospital next morning. Campbell came to me in great distress, to say that shortly after I had left the day previous William had been reading aloud a newspaper on his bed when he called out suddenly, "I'm very ill," and fell back. They went to him; the apothecary declared it was cholera, and immediately had him conveyed to a little adjoining room, where he was placed alone for fear of infection. All night he had been crying out in dreadful pain; and still his pleadings for water, which the doctor had forbidden, were very sad to hear.

Campbell had been as much with him as was allowed, and told me William had in moments of consciousness expressed his peace and joy in believing; it

had softened all his pain to feel it was his Saviour who was chastening him, and often through the night he had seemed to be speaking with Him.

He had wished to see me, so I went in. "All I wanted is given me," he said; "I did so want to die here, because I feared my heart would forget again, and I knew up in the front there would be no one to help me to love Jesus." I read to him verses from Romans viii, and I John iii. "I'm just dying," he murmured; "oh, give me some water." It was useless now to torture him with refusing, for he was fast sinking. The second illness had broken down even his iron frame. "I'm clinging to the Rock—I'm so glad I shall see Him so soon—I'm not afraid, for I did go just as I was,

* * * "Without one plea,
But that his blood was shed for me."

He was wandering all the rest of the day. The next morning Campbell would not let me see him; William had become quite black in the face, and Campbell feared the closeness of the room might make me ill.

William died a few hours after. He had said to Campbell, "I've been praying for my poor wife; may this sorrow lead her to One who'll be better to her than ever I was." One of the last things he was distinctly heard to repeat was a verse of a favorite hymn—

"Be with me through the valley,
When heart and flesh shall fail;
And softly, softly, lead me on,
Until within the veil.

"Then faith shall turn to gladness,
To find myself with Thee;
And trembling hope shall realize
Her full felicity."

His last words were to Campbell, "Jesus has come for me now; I don't need the tabernacle any more, for it will be *fulness of Joy* in His presence *for ever and ever.*"

And what of his Sophie? She lives yet in the old town. God took her baby to Himself, and father and child now wait to welcome her. She was broken-hearted when tidings of her loss came, and "thought bitter things of Him who had sent her such bitter sorrow." But she thinks not so now. Her William's prayers were answered, and she now looks to meeting him in their heavenly home. She feels they are not lost to each other; the Saviour is all her trust, and she rejoices in His love. Her constant prayer is to be made ready to see Him, and for the hour of her summons she now waits in a loving, trustful spirit.

I must not talk to you longer, dear soldiers, but I will just ask each of you to learn this fourth chapter of Isaiah; it is very short, and will not take up much of your time. May He, who so blessed it to William L——, give it power to lead many of you close to Himself. Soon you will be lost for ever if that "tabernacle" is not *your* hiding place. It *has* sheltered many travellers along life's rough way. Many a weary, suffering one, who once hid there, has now entered that land of which it is written, "THERE SHALL BE NO NIGHT THERE."

PUBLISHED BY THE SOUTH CAROLINA TRACT SOCIETY.

Printed by Evans & Cogswell, No. 3 Broad street, Charleston, S. C.

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Hollinger Corp.
pH 8.5